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Hawaii's shores, such as these high waves at Waimea Bay, can be dangerous, particularly to those unfamiliar with the isles. In the last month, there have been seven drownings on Oahu beaches, raising concern among safety officials.

## A drowning season

**A rash of ocean deaths has officials studying the situation with concern**

**EXHIBIT** "/

### HFD issues swimming safety tips

By Rod Antone  
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string of recent drownings has caused Honolulu ocean safety officials to wonder whether they should be doing anything differently to save more lives.

From June 6 to Tuesday, there were seven drownings at Oahu beaches, most of them involving tourists and shallow water. Besides those two factors, however, those who watch the ocean say they do not see a trend.

"Different ages, different sexes ... we're doing our utmost to try and understand if this is a situation which we need to adjust our operation to or if this is something that we can't fix," said Ocean Safety Operations Chief James Howe. "I think what we're all looking at is a situation that we're not comfortable with.



Warning signs posted by water-safety officials as conditions warrant. "If in doubt, don't go out," they advise.

"We're concerned, we're all concerned."

The seven recent deaths bring the total number of Oahu ocean drownings this year up to nine so far, more than doubling last year's total of four.

Most of the drownings took place in June and include two at Hanauma Bay, a diver from Oregon at Yokohama Bay, a 31-year-old Salt Lake man who lost his jet ski at Maunalua Bay, a 19-year-old Hawaii Kai native near Portlock, and an 18-year old visitor from California at the Blowhole.

The latest drowning took place at Lanikai on July 2, where a Japanese tourist died while snorkeling.

"These incidents have been happening pretty close to shore, not surf areas," said Howe. "This kind of makes us wonder, are we getting a different type of visitor?"

Honolulu Fire Department Spokesman Capt. Richard Soo believes so.

"It's a different type of tourist," said Soo. "They're not satisfied with staying in the tour bus and taking pictures.

"Some of them are putting themselves at risk."

Howe said the community can help by letting visitors know the dangers of the ocean.

"Our lifestyle here is so different," he said. "We need to be aware that things that we do that are very normal to us, and that we may look real easy, may not be the case for many of the people that visit.

"If they see somebody that may be attempting to try something that they shouldn't, locals should share their knowledge, share the aloha."

Howe said he hopes the numbers do not overshadow the job which lifeguards are doing, and the lives that are being saved.

According to a summary of lifeguard log sheet data from last year, there were an estimated 18 million visits to Oahu beaches. Of the beachgoers, 1,360 had to be rescued and another 92,717 given first aid.

"The lifeguards are there for a good reason. We're getting a lot of people but we're not getting them all," Howe said. "We try."

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On Monday, fire rescue staffer Lee

Marques helped look for missing man Daniel Dick at East Honolulu's Blowhole. Dick was found drowned later that day.

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## HFD issues swimming safety tips

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Due to the rash of recent drownings on the island, the Honolulu Fire Department has provided the general public with the following safety tips:

- >> Always swim with a buddy, never alone.
- >> Know your limitations. Do not try to keep up with stronger, more skilled swimmers or encourage limited swimmers to keep up with you.
- >> Only swim in areas supervised by a water safety officer.
- >> Watch out for the "Dangerous Toos" -- too tired, too cold, too far from safety, too much sun, too much strenuous activity.
- >> Do not mix alcohol and swimming. Alcohol impairs your judgment, balance, and coordination, which affects your swimming and diving skills, and reduces your body's ability to stay warm.
- >> Be aware of local weather conditions and prepare for sudden storms. It is wise to stop swimming or boating as soon as you see or hear a storm.
- >> Teach children to swim at an early age.
- >> Children should never be left unsupervised in or near any body of water, not even for a second.
- >> Toys, wagons, and bicycles should not be left around the pool.
- >> Install a fence with a self-locking gate around your pool to prevent unsupervised children from entering.
- >> Take a cardiopulmonary resuscitation course to learn what to do in an emergency.
- >> Know how to prevent, recognize, and respond to emergencies. Remember to check-call-care -- check the scene to ensure it is safe, and check the victim; call 911; and care for the person until help arrives.

Remember that no one is immune to drowning, not even an experienced swimmer.

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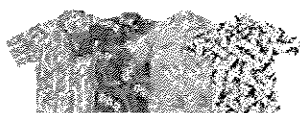
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